

said, and VA officials stuck with the earlier data because trying to explain "would be more challenging and perhaps more confusing."

"The reason they felt it was OK to do that was that, although the numbers are increasing" due to more troops being discharged and seeking help, Benson said, "the rate of PTSD is staying relatively constant."

But critics said that even if the annual PTSD rate was constant, the number of cases was rising nonetheless.

"They continue to downplay the severity and the real size of the problem," said Paul Rieckhoff, executive director of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and a platoon leader during the war.

VA officials also had at the time of the February budget hearing a report from the department's Special Committee on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It warned that the VA was unable handle services to new combat veterans as well as survivors of past wars, saying: "We can't do both jobs at once within current resources."

Most of the PTSD cases the VA sees involve veterans from earlier conflicts, primarily Vietnam.

Baugh of Kansas City won't talk much about his Iraq deployment because it triggers bad memories. But when he returned home in 2004, he couldn't escape them.

"I was jumpy, angry, irritated, sleeping one, two hours a night," Baugh said. "I was totally worn out. I'd drink and drink and drink just to shut the memories down and the nightmares."

His wife pushed him to get help. Baugh said he'll "jump through the ceiling" if she drops a frying pan. The clattering of kids skateboarding down his street sounds just like "gunfire in the distance: kack-kack-kack-kack."

Joshua Lansdale knows about nightmares and noises, too. A 23-year-old veteran from Kansas City, North, he spent 11 months in the Sunni Triangle as a firefighter and emergency medical technician with the Army Reserve's 487th Engineer Detachment.

"It was a pretty hot zone," he said. "We took a lot of mortar fire, IEDs, car bombs, saw a lot of helicopter crashes and worked the UN embassy bombing. I dragged a lot of people out of burning buildings, cars, motorcycle wrecks and explosions."

Back home, Lansdale was diagnosed with PTSD and joined a support group at the VA hospital. He predicted that returning troops would overrun the VA.

"A third of all soldiers are seeking help," he said. "Do we have the capability of treating all those soldiers? I don't think we do."

HONORING THE LIFE OF SERGEANT MIKE STOKELY

(Mr. WESTMORELAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Mike Stokely joined his fellow soldiers in the National Guard in Iraq, turning down a service opportunity that would have allowed him to stay home in Georgia.

Last year Sergeant Stokely married his high school sweetheart. Then, 1 week later, he answered his Nation's call to duty and headed to Iraq as part of the 48th Brigade.

Sergeant Stokely's work in the Army fulfilled his lifelong dream. According to his father, Coweta County Solicitor Robert Stokely, from the time Sergeant Stokely was in middle school, he

cared more about seeing his name on dog tags than seeing his name on a driver's license. As a rising senior high school star, he chose to spend his fleeting days of youthful freedom at a Fort Benning boot camp.

In early August of last year, Sergeant Stokely called his family from Iraq and told them that if the time came to make the ultimate sacrifice for his Nation, he was ready. Then on August 16, 2005, after having been on duty for more than 30 hours, Sergeant Stokely volunteered for another mission. Sergeant Stokely stood guard as his best friend and another soldier checked a suspicious location. An IED exploded, and Sergeant Stokely died in his best friend's arms. It happened 3 months after his wedding day.

The father of this American hero told me, "As much as I hurt for the loss of my older son and the memories we will never have, I am thankful for the 23 years we had and a son who knew his purpose in life, and his dreams were fulfilled."

I want to commend Sergeant Stokely and his family for his honor and service and his dedication to duty.

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OUR MEN AND WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me just reflect on what we owe the men and women on the frontlines of Afghanistan and Iraq. I think we owe them the best equipment, the best leadership, and the best minds. So I was disturbed as I read the article in the USA Today that indicated that more soldiers were being killed in the utilization of Humvees in 2005 and 2006 than had been in the years past in the war in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, it is important and imperative that an immediate reaction be given and an action be taken by the Department of Defense to help save the lives of our young men and women on the frontlines, the reinforcement of Humvees, new technology in body armor, new technology in head gear. Our children are dying. They are without the proper body armor and Humvees, and that is insufficient for a country of this size.

Finally, it is imperative that a full accounting be given about the dollars that have been spent in Iraq as to what they have been spent for, why they have been spent, and, of course, an accounting that shows that no corruption has taken place.

HONORING DODIE DITTMER OF THE COMMUNICATION WORKERS OF AMERICA

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor my friend Dodie Dittmer of the Communication Workers of America for her 43 years of service. She started at Ohio Bell in Dayton back in 1963.

Dodie Dittmer has always been there for workers and, in the great tradition of the labor movement, always been there for her community. She was always a good soldier, a private in her humility as she was willing to pitch in on every task and a general in her leadership. She was always a good soldier in the battle for social and economic justice. For that, we are all thankful to Dodie Dittmer.

REDUCING CLASS SIZE

(Mr. MEEK of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to announce that last Friday a bipartisan coalition of 20 State senators, all 14 Democrats and 6 Republicans State senators, came together to protect the people of the State of Florida as it relates to smaller class sizes.

The people of Florida in 2002 voted and approved class size limits in Florida to make sure that the State pays for smaller class sizes and not local districts. Floridians said three things: Public education is a high priority, classrooms packed with students are unacceptable, and that Floridians want tax dollars to provide a quality education for all of Florida's children. But some State officials tried to undercut that decision made by the voters for Florida's children.

Today, I want to enter the names of those senators and those State representatives that put forth their vote to make sure that we protect those that are in public education now in the State of Florida and those that are yet unborn. They should be commended and their names placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for future generations.

State Senators Nancy Argenziano, Dave Aronberg, Larcenia Bullard, Walter Campbell, Jr., M. Mandy Dawson, Paula Dockery, Rodolfo Garcia, Jr., Steven Geller, Anthony Hill, Dennis Jones, Ron Klein, Alfred Lawson, Jr., Evelyn Lynn, Gwen Margolis, Les Miller, Nan Rich, Gary Siplin, Rod Smith, Alex Villalobos, and Frederica Wilson.

State Representatives Bruce Atone, Loran Ausley, Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Kim Berfield, Mary Brandenburg, Phillip Brutus, Susan Bucher, Edward Buller, Faye Culp, Joyce Cusack, Terry L. Fields, Anne M. Gannon, Dan Gelber, Audrey Gibson, Kenneth Gottlieb, Ron Greenstein, Bob Henriquez, Wilbert Holloway, Ed Homan, and Arthenia Joyner.

State Representatives Charles Justice, Will Kendrick, Marcello Llorente, Richard Machek, Matthew Meadows, Frank Peterman, Juan-Carlos Planas, Ari Porth, John Quinones, Curtis Richardson, Julio Robiana, Yolly Roberson, Timothy Ryan, Franklin Sands, John Seiler, Irving Slosberg, Christopher Smith, Eleanor Sobel,